

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 1803

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PE
SUBJECT: SECOND DAY OF FEB 27 -28 STRIKE

REF: LIMA 1756

SUMMARY: STRIKE APPEARS LESS SUCCESSFUL IN ITS SECOND DAY THAN DURING ITS FIRST 24 HOURS. SCATTERED VIOLENCE IN OUTLYING DISTRICTS HAS RESTRICTED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO RPT NO REPORTS OF ANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS INVOLVING US CITISENS OR US-OPERATED FIRMS. ALMOST ENTIRE PORT AND MINING SECTORS REPORTEDLY OPERATING NORMALLY. GOP FEB 27 DECLARED STRIKE ILLEGAL, INCREASING PRESSURE ON ALL WORKERS TO GET TO THEIR JOBS. FRUSTRATION OF ULTRA LEFT (CUL) AT STRIKE'S APPARENT "FAILURE" MAY CAUSE LEADERS TO TRY TO INCITE MORE VIOLENCE LATE FEB 28 AND TO TRY TO EXTEND 48 HOUR PROTEST. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FIRST DAY (FEB 27) OF THE 48 HOUR STRIKE PRODUCED LITTLE SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISLOCATION OR REDUCTION OF PRODUCTIVITY. THE SOCIAL PROTEST SIDE OF THE STRIKE, PROBABLY INSPIRED BY ULTRA LEFT (CUL) STUDENTS AND ACTIVISTS, RESULTED IN SCATTERED VIOLENCE SUCH AS ROAD BLOCKS, ROCK THROWING, AND

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SOME RANDOM VANDALISM. THESE ACTIVITIES CAUSED CONCERN FEB 27 THAT FEWER WORKERS WOULD TRY TO GO TO WORK THE FOLLOWING DAY AND THAT LESS TRANSPORTATION WOULD BE AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, ON FEB 28 THE PUBLICLY OWNED BUSES ARE OPERATING AGAIN ON SCHEDULE AND MORE OF THE PRIVATELY OWNED BUSES AND TAXIS ARE VENTURING FORTH. MORE BUSINESSES ARE OPEN FEB 28 THAN FEB 27. ONCE AGAIN SOME BUSINESSES MAY CLOSE EARLIER TO PERMIT WORKERS IN THE

SUBURBS TO REACH THEIR HOMES WITHOUT LONG WAITS OR INCIDENTS.
(THE GOP CLAIMS THAT ONLY 8,561 WORKERS OF THE 163,470 TOTAL
WORK FORCE IN THE LIMA-CALLAO'S INDUSTRIAL SECTOR STRUCK
FEB 27.)

2. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE ULTRA LEFT (CUL) LEADERS, UPSET
WITH STRIKE'S LACK OF SUCCESS, ARE CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES TO
SEEING PROTEST END WITH A WHIMPER. RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING THAT
THEY WILL TRY TO CREATE ADDITIONAL VIOLENCE LATE FEB 28 AND
SEEK AN EXTENSION OF THE STRIKE. THE BANK WORKERS, WHO GENERALLY
ACCEPTED THE FEB 27-28 STRIKE CALL, CONCEIVABLY COULD EXTEND
THEIR STRIKE IF THEIR MAJOR LEADERS ARE PROSECUTED OR PHYSICALLY
MISTREATED. ONE BANK WORKER LEADER WAS REPORTEDLY DETAINED
FEB 27.

3. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS PRESS REPORTS AND UNOFFICIAL OBSERVERS,
THE STRIKE'S FIRST DAY WAS EVEN LESS SUCCESSFUL OUTSIDE OF THE
LIMA-CALLAO AREA. AN EXCEPTION TO THIS GENERAL RULE WAS THE
FEDERATION OF BANK WORKERS (WHICH SUPPORTED THE STRIKE BY
CLOSING MOST OF THE PRIVATE BANKS IN MAJOR PERUVIAN CITIES AND
TOWNS) ALTHOUGH EVEN THIS WELL DISCIPLINED COMMUNIST FEDERATION
DID NOT RPT NOT SHUT DOWN THE PRIVATE BANKING SECTOR COMPLETELY.
THE TOURIST CENTER OF CUZCO REPORTEDLY HAD TRANSPORT SHORTAGES,
CLOSURE OF SOME SHOPS AND A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF
THE STRIKE. THE LOCAL PRESS NOTED THAT AT THE PORT CITY OF
CHIMBOTE'S SIDERPERU PLANT (IRON AND STEEL) AND PICSA-
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ASTETLROS (FISHMEAL) ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF THE LABOR FORFE WERE
PRESENT FOR WORK, AND THAT PRIVATE BANKS WERE CLOSED. HOWEVER,
NO DEMONSTRATIONS OR SERIOUS VIOLENCE WERE REPORTED. OTHER
KEY PORTS AND INDUSTRIAL CENTERS REPORTED PRACTICALLY NO RPT NO
SIGNIFICANT SLOWDOWNS OR WORK STOPPAGES AND ONLY SCATTERED
INTERRUPTIONS OF TRAFFIC FEB 27. ACCORDING TO THE
PRESS, GOP OWNED CENTROMIN MINING COMPLEX OPERATED NORMALLY AND
ONLY TWO SMALL MINES IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY HAD STRIKE PROBLEMS.
SOUTHER PERU AS REPORTED (REFTEL) HAD NO PROBLEMS FEB 27 AND
EXPECTED NONE FEB 28.

4. EMBASSY HAD NOT RPT NOT RECEIVED ANY REPORTS OF VIOLENCE
INVOLVING US CITIZENS. TOUR GROUPS CONTINUE TO GO IN AND OUT OF
CUZCO WHICH HAS HAD SOME PROTEST ACTIVITY. INFORMAL EMBASSY
CHECK OF US-OWNED OR OPERATED BUSINESSES REVEALED NO SERIOUS
PROBLEMS AND OFFICES IN ALL SUCH FIRMS WERE OPEN FEB 28.

5. THE GOP DECISION TO RELY PRINCIPALLY ON THE METROPOLITAN
POLICE, GUARDIA CIVIL AND GUARDIA REPUBLICANA APPARENTLY HAS
BEEN VINDICATED BY EVENTS. THE ARMED FORCES REMAIN ON ALERT BUT
AWAY FROM DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE POPULATION. HELICOPTERS AND
LIGHT OBSERVATION PLANES HAVE BEEN SURVEYING THE AREA BUT TANKS,

OTHER MILITARY VEHICLES AND ARMED TROOPS HAVE BEEN ABSENT FROM THE SCENE. GOP RELIANCE ON THE POLICE UNDERLINED ITS POSITION THAT THE STRIKE IS NOT RPT NOT A POPULAR CAUSE ENDANGERING PUBLIC ORDER. SOME BUSINESSMEN AND LABOR LEADERS WERE WORRIED THAT THIS POSTURE WOULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER VANDALISM AND ATTEMPTS TO HALT TRAFFIC, BUT EMBASSY'S LATEST READING SUGGESTS THAT GOP GAMBLE SEEMS LIKELY TO PAY OFF. ON THE OFFICIAL SIDE, THE GOP INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON WORKERS TO SHOW UP AT THEIR JOBS THE MORNING OF FEB 28 BY DECLARING THE STRIKE "ILLEGAL" FEB 27. THIS DECISION AUTHORIZES DOCKING THE PAY OF STRIKERS FOR THEIR ABSENCE AND CUTS OFF THEIR WEEKLY BONUS. IT DOES NOT RPT NOT AUTHORIZE FIRING OF WORKERS WHICH NORMALLY COULD ONLY BE DONE AFTER 3 DAYS OF "UNJUSTIFIABLE" ABSENCE.

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6. THE GOP ON THE POLICE/SECURITY SIDE REPORTEDLY DETAINED ABOUT 185 PERSONS (INCLUDING 15 CGTP LEADERS) OVER PERIOD FEB 25 THRU EARLY FEB 27. LATER DETENTIONS OF THOSE PARTICIPATING IN DISORDERS BROUGHT THE TOTAL DETAINED FIGURE TO 600 BY THE NIGHT OF FEB 27, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS. (EMBASSY UNOFFICIAL TALLY WAS NO HIGHER THAN THIS REPORT.)

7. COMMENT: GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED TV AND DAILY PRESS COVERAGE IS PREDICTABLY UPBEAT IN REPORTING STRIKE'S LACK OF SUCCESS. HOWEVER, AS OF NOON FEB 28, THE GOP'S POSITIVE AND CONGRATULATORY TONE SEEMED LARGELY JUSTIFIED BY EVENTS TO DATE.
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